

A Kentucky State Senate candidate who attended a "voter registration" event at Oldham County High School Wednesday said in an email exchange last week that she "inadvertently violated" school policy by distributing campaign bumper stickers to students.

Lindsey Tichenor, who is from La Grange and running as a Republican to represent District 6, said a parent supporter who does not belong to her campaign team proposed the voter registration event to OCHS Principal Andy Moore. That parent, Tichenor said, "volunteered to set up a table and asked if I would like to be there."

Lori Webb, Communications Director for Oldham County Schools, confirmed that Tichenor did not approach OCHS Principal Andy Moore about the event several weeks ago, but said there was no indication she would be present.

"[She] did not say Tichenor would be accompanying her," Webb said in a phone interview last week. "He thought it was just a voter registration event. He had no clue of the intentions behind the event."

Webb said that Tichenor sat at the registration table handing out campaign bumper stickers while wearing a shirt that read "Let's Go Brandon."

Tichenor affirmed, but said the district provided "no guidelines" beyond "time allotted and the need to bring a table and chairs."

"I did wear a 'Let's Go Brandon' t-shirt under my jacket, as I believe it is my First Amendment right to do so," she said. "In the course of our time there, several staff, counselors and administrators were aware of our presence and did not offer any guidance that we were doing anything against school policy."

The bumper stickers, she said, were only given to family and acquaintances.

"I saw several students that I knew via my son, nieces, nephews, and parents and got out my bumper stickers which had been in my bag and handed them out to them, many of which are not eligible to vote but are drivers. In hindsight, now being aware through indirect communications from others that there is a school policy, I realize it may have been an inappropriate place to hand out bumper stickers."

In a message to parents, OCHS Principal Andy Moore, who did not name Tichenor, said what transpired at the event is "not allowed" on school property.

"What occurred yesterday is that the volunteers that showed up did so representing specific candidates and partisan beliefs," he said. "While all students that showed up were encouraged to be an active participant, it was clear to them who these individuals represented."

Webb said the decision to host a voter registration event historically rests with the building principal and does not require approval from the school board.

Tichenor said in an email exchange Friday that she awaited response from the district with description of what written policy was broken.

"I would suggest, in the future, for OC Schools to create a procedure for any group planning to set up a voter registration table, to be given notice of the policy and sign off in agreement to abide by this policy," she said. "Had that been the case here, this would be a non-issue."

Webb, in a follow-up Monday morning, shared the administrative regulation document from the Oldham County Board of Education related to the distribution and posting of non-school community information.

The second page of that document lists "an endorsement of a particular candidate for public office, other than a candidate for student elective office" as a reason for denial of request.

County Clerk Julie Barr, who also chairs the Oldham County Board of Elections, emphasized in a phone interview that the event was not done on behalf of the clerk's office. When asked whether the sticker distribution is problematic outside of school policy, Barr said she consulted with County Attorney John Carter and the State Board of Elections.

"I met with the county attorney and he agrees with me that we don't have a dog in the fight [because it was] not a clerk-sanctioned voter drive," she said, deferring to the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance. "We are just a filing agency for candidates."

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